

# Ghana Day Of Percussion Held At Mankessim

A local chapter of a US based world renowned music service organisation, the Percussive Arts Society (PAS) has held its first Ghana Day of Percussion at Mankessim in the central region of Ghana, West Africa.

The Ghana Percussive Arts Society hosted the three-day event from the 27th-29th September, 2004 with a durbar on the 28th September, 2004 in collaboration with the International Center for African Culture and Arts (ICACA) and the National Commission for Civic Education, Adansi South District at the Royal Palace Hotel, Mankessim.

The local chapter, which is the first on the continent of Africa, is under the presidency of Mr. Harold Akyeampong, an ethnomusicologist and a lecturer based in the USA.

Days of Percussion (DOP) which is going to be an annual affair, are special days set aside by the parent PAS to bring together percussion teachers, students, professional and community performers to play, share, and network for the promotion and preservation of percussion throughout the world. The three-day event attracted various percussionists and community groups from all over Ghana. Among the groups were the Africana Music and Dance Ensemble from Accra, the Essereso Adowa group from Kumasi.

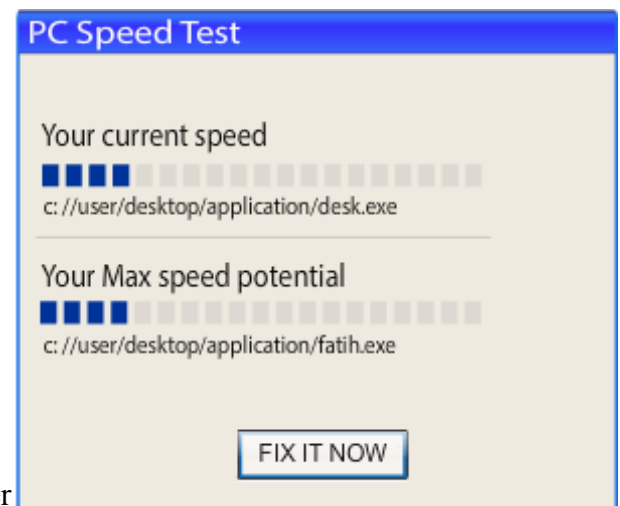
The Gambia Brothers Drum Ensemble from Takoradi, Kusum Agoromma from Etsii Krowa, Ekumfi Botweben Brass Band, and the Ekumfi Ekotsi Women Adzewa group also participated. The other groups were Akwakrom Abele group, Borbor Fantse Fontomfom Ensemble, Ebibiman Cultural troupe, the Obrumankoma, Odapagyan and Oson Traditionals from Mankessim and various Asafo and Epirede drum groups from the community. They all took turns to perform and performances were interspersed with speeches by special guest speakers.

Among the dignitaries who graced the occasion were Dr. Daniel Amponsah, Nana Ekua Antwiwaa, Mr. Willie Klutse, Mr. Harold Akyeampong, Mr. J.F. Quainoo, Mr. Eric Arthur Bonful, Mr. William Tenkorang, and Mr. Kobby Twum Agyeman. Mr. M.K. Ato Brown of Radio Peace, Winneba was the Master of Ceremony.

Mr Dag Kofi Akyeampong, an ex-Assembly man of the Mfantseman district and a retired educator was the chairman for the occasion. He appealed to the youth to master their craft very well because drumming like sports has become very lucrative and is now economically rewarding. He also advised them to secure the best formal education they can get before they can mature into better professionals and instructors. He said, 'the teaching of percussion to foreign students involves communicating in English, so if one can not speak a word in English, he is definitely going to have problems?.'

Mr. J F. Quainoo, a health consultant from the Ministry of Health, Cape Coast also advised the performers especially the youth not to combine playing drums with drugs use. He said that drugs destroy people, so they should avoid using drugs especially drinking and smoking marijuana.

Mr. Willie Klutse, a director of the Adansi South district office of the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) took the opportunity to educate the public on the forth-coming general elections in Ghana. He appealed to



everyone for political tolerance and referred to the drum ensemble as a unifying example that we should all emulate by playing together, irrespective of one's background or political leaning.

He said "people of different political views are not enemies, but all components in the development of democracy, therefore we should accommodate the opposing views". He also appealed to the public to turn out in large numbers to vote wisely and safely during the day of elections.

The special guest of honour was Nana Ekua Antwiwaa, an Nkosuohemaa of Akim Abenase. Known in private life as Dale E. Kinney. She is an American social worker and the founder/CEO of the BAAKO YE Project Inc. Ghana/USA. An avid dancer, she excited the audience with her dexterity in fontonfrom dance to a thunderous applause during a musical interlude. She later took the opportunity to educate the public on the importance of culture and the need for all people to come together to help in the country's development.

She also continued that Africans have a legacy that the West is now spending money and time to study. So it is very important that occasions like these be organised frequently to sensitise the people of its importance. She also took time to educate the public about the BAAKO YE Project in Akim Abenase where a health center is being built.

Dr. Daniel Amponsah aka Egya Koo Nimoh, a renowned Ghanaian traditional musicologist and lecturer of the Center for Cultural Studies at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology, Kumasi also spoke at the function. He appealed to the government and the various NGOs to lend support to cultural organisations to help to preserve and promote cultural arts at home and abroad.

In a speech read on his behalf by Mr. K. Baffoe, who is also a lecturer from the Center, he educated the performers and the audience on the significance and economic importance of drumming. He then, appealed to the performers to master their skills, if they have dreams of teaching foreign students and earning income from it.

Mr. Twum Agyeman, an International cultural consultant based in Germany also appealed to the government to support cultural organisations and to fund their participation in international festivals for them to represent Ghana as cultural ambassadors and to bring in foreign exchange. He said, "in the west, many people know music and dances from the Sene-Gambian and the southern Africa region than from other parts of Africa".

This is the result of their government's involvement in supporting and sponsoring its cultural troupes at international events. Cultural performers are not only musicians and dancers, but ambassadors of their respective countries as they boost tourism in its various forms. It is very important that we need to take a good look at this source of public relations " he concluded.

Mr. Eric Arthur-Bonful, a Kumasi based Communications and Travel and Tour consultant educated the youth on the economic importance of percussion. He also appealed to the public to change their negative perception about culture and stop with all sorts of negative labels for our own cultural expressions. He said, "Culture practice is not evil as many people want us to believe, it is rather what identifies us as who we are". He also admonished that, "performers should look beyond playing in the community and strive to make a living from it".

Mr. William Tenkorang, a UK based Communication expert appealed to all performing artistes in Ghana to form unions that the government would recognise. He said in unity they could canvass and lobby for their rights and to receive benefits such as grants from appropriate local and international organisations. He said "In the western world people are learning about us, so we need to prepare our teachers at home and send them abroad as cultural ambassadors".

Mr. Harold Akyeampong, the president of the local chapter, who is also the director of KUSUM AGORO Multicultural Arts Project at the Center for World Folkloric Arts Inc; USA, also spoke at the function. During his speech, he recounted the history of the PAS and the founding of the local affiliate. He appealed to all interested drummers) to




register, become members and to take advantage of the enormous benefits that the organisation has to offer.



He said that the west is now paying serious attention to the African performing arts, especially percussion that falls in the world music curriculum. This is creating a demand for quality native instructors and teachers. To meet that demand, he said plans are afoot to establish in collaboration with relevant cultural organisations the first percussion school in Kumasi soon. He stated that the choice of the Kumasi is very relevant as it is centrally located and to live up to its accolade the cultural capital of Ghana.

He therefore, appealed to the government, various foreign embassies in Ghana, international organisations and local NGOs to lend support in realising such a laudable goal. He also took the opportunity to thank all the attendees of the three-day event. He later appealed to everyone to prepare for the 2005 Day of Percussion that would attract a number of international percussionists, teachers, students and performers from all over the world including countries such as Kenya, Germany, Singapore, Argentina, UK, Grenada and the USA.

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